

Millions for Prisoners Human Rights March

NO SHACKLES

Vol 1.10

Letter from the Editor

Brothers and Sisters,

I hope everyone is enjoying the summer so far. We are only a couple of months away from the march and this edition of the newsletter focuses on reasons why we are protesting the exclusion clause in the 13th Amendment. In protesting we want to call attention to the fact that slavery is still legal in the United States. It's important for all citizens and people worldwide to recognize that our society is intertwined with a gross and unjust system because currently many people are still completely unaware.

We've allowed for the prison population to exponentially inflate as a result of our turning a blind eye to the institutional preying that occurs on those who cross on the roads between the minority racial class and poverty. This country has created a system that maintains the population it preys upon by limiting socioeconomic development opportunities for low income families. There are hundreds of thousands of individuals suffering within this system of all ages, races and genders. Along with this, hundreds of thousands more suffering as a result of their loved one's struggle within the system.

This issue also points to the fact that we cannot depend on protest alone to get us to the point of real justice and racial equality. The magnitude of this situation points to the need for revolutionary thinking. Actual Black equality and prison abolition in this country is a radical demand; requiring drastic political, economic and social reform. But just because a demand is seemingly radical, does not mean we cannot ask, it means we should ask. The abolition of chattel raced based slavery in the United States was radical, but it happened through protest, organizing and reform. Let us continue to focus on the necessity of our demands until they are accomplished.

In solidarity,
Amani Sawari (@SawariMi)



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The 13th Amendment to the Constitution declared that "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction."



America's Toxic Prisons: The Environmental Injustices of Mass Incarceration

By **Candice Bernd**, **Zoe Loftus-Farren** and **Maureen Nandini Mitra** | Earth Island Journal

truth-out.org

June 1, 2017

Keith Cole is the lead plaintiff in a class-action lawsuit challenging conditions at Wallace Pack Unit in Navasota, Texas. Prisoners there are exposed to unbearable heat and for years were left to drink arsenic-contaminated water. (Photo: Michael Stravato / The New York Times / Redux)



Matthew Morgenstern is convinced his Hodgkin's lymphoma was caused by exposure to toxic coal ash from the massive dump right across the road from SCI Fayette, a maximum-security prison in LaBelle, Pennsylvania, where he is currently serving a 5- to 10-year sentence. "In 2010 and until I left in 2013, the water always had a brown tint to it. Not to mention the dust

clouds that used to come off the dump trucks ... which we all breathed in.... Every single day I would wake up and there would be a layer of dust on everything," he writes from inside the prison. When Morgenstern was sent back to SCI Fayette in 2016 after he violated parole, he found that the dust issue had abated a bit -- work at the dump has been stalled for a year due to litigation -- but the water still runs brownish and sometimes has "a funky smell." He says he knows that the environment in and around the prison is still "messed up" and he's concerned that his immune system, already weakened from fighting and overcoming cancer, won't be able to withstand another onslaught of toxic exposure. "I myself have no doubt that if I'm kept here at Fayette, I will once again become sick," he writes.

Likewise, in Navasota, Texas, Keith Milo Cole and John Wesley Ford, aging prisoners at the Wallace Pack Unit, worry about how their prolonged exposure to arsenic-laced water and extreme heat during summer months may have affected their health over the long term. Like Morgenstern, Cole says the water at his unit was brown until a federal judge ordered the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) to provide the prisoners safe drinking water. "It used to be where you could take a white wash rag and put it in the sink and water would run on it about 10 or 15 minutes, and it would actually turn brown," says Cole, who is serving a life sentence.

Farther west, in California, Kenneth Hartman was nearly 30 years into a life sentence when he contracted valley fever in 2008 at the California State Prison in Lancaster. The infection, caused by inhaling a soil-dwelling fungus, can be devastating. Though it is often mistaken for the common flu, it can kill people or leave those infected with lifelong symptoms. "The intensity or severity [of my symptoms] kept increasing to the point that I clearly remember thinking, if I get any sicker, I'm going to die," Hartman says, writing from Lancaster where he is still incarcerated. "My physical strength was near to zero. ... I had a persistent dry cough, severe night sweats and bouts of vertigo that rendered me practically immobile."

The plight of these prisoners points to a nationwide problem that's inextricably linked to power imbalances within the US criminal legal system -- a system in which prisoners are often out of sight and thus out of the



public mind. As a special investigation by Truthout and Earth Island Journal shows, the toxic impact of prisons extends far beyond any individual prison, or any specific region in the United States. Though some prisons provide particularly egregious examples, mass incarceration in the US impacts the health of prisoners, prison-adjacent communities and local ecosystems from coast to coast.

A 700 Percent Increase in Prisoner Population

The US locks up more people per capita than any other nation in the world. According to the Prison Policy Initiative, currently some 2.3 million people are confined in more than 6,000 prisons, jails and detention centers operated by multiple federal, state, county and private actors. That's about the population of Houston, Texas, the fourth largest city in the nation.

Since the 1970s, the US has seen a 700 percent increase in the number of people imprisoned, a result of the growth in "tough on crime" and "war on drugs" policies, as well as a concerted effort to control and minimize the power of social movements and other forms of resistance from within communities of color, says David Naguib Pellow, a professor of environmental studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara, who's writing a book on prisons and environmental justice. The rate at which we lock people up today is some five-times higher than most countries, even though the crime rate in the US is comparable to that of other stable, industrialized nations.

Holding large groups of people in closed facilities brings with it a host of associated civil and human rights problems -- problems that have been well documented. But until recently, not much thought or research had been expended on the connections between mass incarceration and environmental issues, that is, problems that arise when prisons are sited on or near toxic sites, as well as when prisons themselves becomes sources of toxic contamination.

Paul Wright, executive director of the Human Rights Defense Center, was among the few people who began to look into this connection on a broad scale nearly three decades ago. When Wright was serving time in Washington State's McNeil Island prison in the 1990s, the tap water there too, used to run brown. "Yet the prison officials would be putting up signs saying the water is safe to drink," he recalls. "There were a lot of environmental issues going on within the prison. It got me thinking. Just seeing how the prisons were on everything, I didn't think they would be any better on the environment."

So Wright, who along with fellow prisoner Ed Mead, had recently started publishing Prison Legal News -- a magazine where prisoners and their families speak up about criminal legal policy and reform -- began filing public records requests for water pollution related complaints in state and federal prisons across the country. "Sure enough, we got all kinds of stuff back saying that the prisons were literally sources of toxic pollution," he says. In 2007, Prison Legal News published findings from 17 states exposing issues related to sewage and sanitation violations in dozens of prisons.

Once he got out in 2003 after serving 17 years, Wright expanded Prison Legal News into the Human Rights Defense Center, a Florida-based nonprofit that advocates on behalf of people held in US detention facilities. In 2014, the Center launched the Prison Ecology Project, which Wright says aims "first and foremost" to map the extent of the intersections between mass incarceration and environmental degradation, and then "do something to change it."

"People [on the outside] generally aren't thinking of prisons and jails as environmental problems or as places where people have legitimate concerns about the environment," Wright says.

It's well known that low-income communities and communities of color are disproportionately impacted by environmental degradation. Polluting facilities are more likely to be built in these communities, and environmental regulations are often less stringently enforced in these neighborhoods. This legacy of environmental injustice extends to the siting of prisons, which, too, are often located in or close to low-income communities. Additionally, they are built on some of the least desirable and most contaminated lands in the country, such as old mining sites, Superfund cleanup sites and landfills. According to a GIS [geographic



information system] analysis of a 2010 dataset of state and federal prisons by independent cartographer Paige Williams, at least 589 federal and state prisons are located within three miles of a Superfund cleanup site on the National Priorities List, with 134 of those prisons located within just one mile.

"A lot of people, when they think of environment and toxic polluters, they think corporations, and they think that the government is somehow a solution to this problem," Wright says. "The prison ecology issue turns that whole thing on its head because in these cases it's the government that's chosen to build these prisons on toxic waste sites or allowed them to become sources of toxic waste. And it is literally holding people at gunpoint at these sites and exposing them."

Former Industrial Sites "Recycled" for Prisons

To get to SCI Fayette, where Matthew Morgenstern is incarcerated along with more than 2,000 other men, you may have to pass through the borough of Brownsville -- a small industrial area along the Monongahela River southwest of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. This used to be a bustling business center connected to the steel industry, but today downtown Brownsville wears the look of a town that's well past its glory days.

America's rust belt is scattered with places like this, where the retreat of industries in the 1970s left working class folks without opportunities. In many of these places, prisons began to fill in the gap, occupying lands left degraded by industrial activities and offering often-unfulfilled promises of employment to impoverished communities.

The land being "recycled" has, in many cases, already been devastated -- to an extent that the construction of a prison may be seen as its only "acceptable" use. "One of the patterns that we see is where corporations have come in, they pillage the environment, be it by mining, forestry or whatever, and then when everything has been exhausted, when trees have been cut down, every last grain of ore has been ripped from the soil, and everything has been contaminated and poisoned in the process, the final solution is, okay now we're going to build a prison here," Wright says.

SCI Fayette -- which is located in the small rural community of LaBelle, about a 12-minute winding drive from Brownsville -- is a perfect example of this. The 237-acre men's prison began operating in 2003 on one corner of what, in the 1940s through the 1970s, was one of the largest coal preparation plants in the world, where coal from nearby mines was washed and graded. The "cleaned" coal was then shipped off to power plants and other markets, while the remaining coal refuse was dumped on and around the hilly, 1,357-acre site. By the mid-1990s, when its owners filed for bankruptcy and abandoned the site, an estimated 40 million tons of coal refuse had been dumped there. At some places the waste piled up some 150 feet.

In 1996, the property was purchased by a local company, Matt Canestrone Contracting (MCC), which entered into a contract with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to dump coal ash -- waste produced by burning coal in power plants -- on the site as part of a land "reclamation" effort. Since it opened in 1997, more than 5 million tons of coal ash has been deposited at the dumpsite, which is right across the road from SCI Fayette. The problem with coal ash is that it's way more toxic than unburned coal waste as it contains higher concentrations of heavy metals and minerals, including mercury, lead, arsenic, hexavalent chromium, cadmium, boron and thallium. At unlined sites, like LaBelle, contaminants can leach into the local water and fine "fugitive dust" can blow into the air.

Coal ash can cause or contribute to many serious health conditions, including respiratory problems, hypertension, heart problems, brain and nervous system damage, liver damage, stomach and intestinal ulcers, and many forms of cancer, including skin, stomach, lung, urinary tract and kidney. Therefore, many environmental experts say the risks posed by such reclamation efforts outweigh the so-called benefits. Right when the coal ash dumping started, LaBelle residents began complaining to the DEP that fugitive dust was making them sick. Over the years, they reported suffering from respiratory problems, kidney failure, and several types of cancer. But the DEP did little more than issue fines. It allowed the prison construction to go forward, essentially putting the health of the entire prison population, as well its staff, at risk.



In 2013, Citizens Coal Council, a coal industry watchdog, filed a federal lawsuit against MCC, alleging that the company was responsible for polluting the local air and water due to its failure to curb fugitive dust. The suit noted that 50 families lived in LaBelle, but made no mention of the prisoners at SCI Fayette. However, prisoners and staff at SCI Fayette have been experiencing health issues that are similar to those reported by local community members. In fact, SCI Fayette is also exposed to two other potential sources of pollution: The boiler system for the prison burns coal for its power (and creates additional coal ash waste), and a new coal terminal along the riverbank, right next to the prison, transfers 3- to 10-million tons of coal per year from boats to rail. Word of the prisoners' plight began filtering out, but it wasn't until 2013 that it reached the ears of Dustin McDaniel, the director of the Abolitionist Law Center (ALC), a Pittsburgh-based public-interest law firm that works on cases involving human rights abuses in prisons.

In September 2014, based on a year-long review of prison medical records, interviews with prisoners, former prisoners and residents of LaBelle, ALC along with the Human Rights Coalition, an advocacy group that fights for prisoners' civil rights, released "[No Escape](#)," a report outlining the health issues people were experiencing in the prison. According to the report, 81 percent of the 75 prisoners who responded to a health survey ALC sent out claimed to suffer from respiratory, throat and sinus conditions; 68 percent experienced gastrointestinal problems; 52 percent reported adverse skin conditions; and 12 percent said they were diagnosed with a thyroid disorder. The report also noted 11 of the 17 prisoners who died at SCI Fayette between 2010 and 2013 had died of cancer.

All of these numbers, McDaniel says, were well above what would be considered normal, though he acknowledges that the health survey was limited in its scope, given the number of respondents. "We don't have a rock-hard analysis that says 'yes, that's the causation' but there's certainly a lot of correlation," he says.

After the ALC report came out, the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (DOC) conducted "a comprehensive review" of the conditions at the prison and issued a statement in December 2014 saying it had found "no scientific data to support claims of any unsafe environmental conditions or any related medical issues to exist at SCI Fayette." It said the prison's water supply had been tested and it had met all relevant drinking standards. The department's review, however, doesn't appear to have included looking into the air quality at the prison.

ALC is currently crunching the numbers on a second, more detailed, health survey that it sent out to all the prisoners at SCI Fayette in 2015 and received 650 responses to. The Center is also pushing the state corrections department to conduct an independent and comprehensive health study of the prisoners, prison staff and community members. The state corrections department did not respond to repeated requests for interviews. Instead, in an emailed response to a few questions, Press Secretary Amy Worden said that the department last conducted an air quality test, for mold and fly ash, in October 2016 and "the results were within parameters set forth by OSHA and ASHRAE and did not require any action." The DOC didn't provide us with a copy of the report or any supporting data, so it's unclear what that test actually revealed.

Worden also said potable water at the facility is tested for bacteria, and TTHM and HAA5 -- byproducts of adding chlorine to disinfect water -- on a monthly basis, in addition to the testing required of Tri County Joint Municipal Authority, which supplies water to the prison. "We are confident that the water supply at SCI Fayette is safe," she said. It's true that the prison's drinking water comes from farther upstream, so any contamination issues the water might have can't be linked to the coal ash dump. However, the Municipal Authority's own water quality reports, dating back to 2013, show that it has consistently exceeded the EPA's maximum levels for TTHMs, exposure to which is associated with adverse health effects, including cancer.

In June last year, Citizens Coal Council and MCC entered an interim agreement on the 2013 lawsuit under which the company agreed to a one-year moratorium on disposal of coal ash at the site. The dump is scheduled to start operating again this July, though given recent market trends, where cheap natural gas is driving power generation away from coal, its long-term future is uncertain.

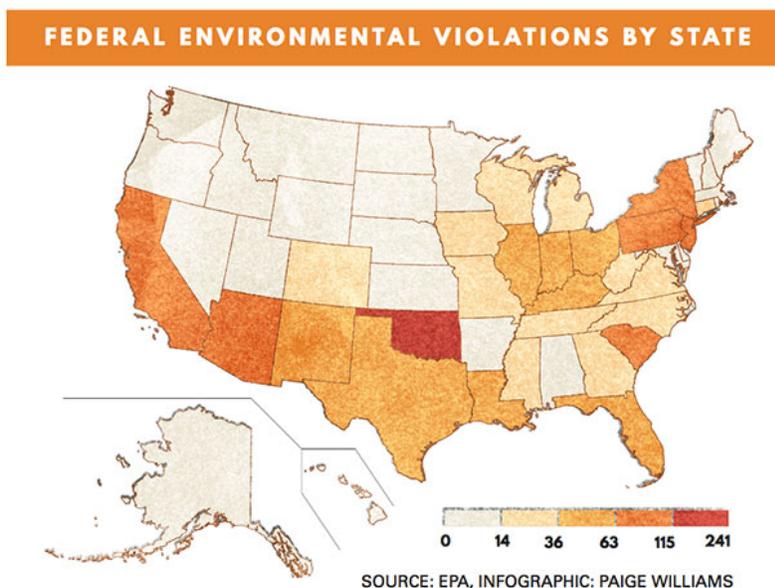


That prospect is small consolation for prisoners like Morgenstern, who say nothing's really changed inside SCI Fayette and people are still getting sick at higher rates than in most prisons. "They [still] constantly blow out a lot of grey dust from the [prison] vents, which [causes] a little pain to my sinuses and I'm always having to blow my nose. ... I'd say probably 65 to 75 percent of us here deal with this issue," he said over the phone in April. "Honestly, I would like to see this place shut down because I know the environmental conditions here would take at least 50 to 60 years to heal. It's putting everybody at risk."

Violations of federal environmental laws in prisons over the past five years.

In California, Sitting Ducks for Valley Fever

There's not much by way of scenery around Avenal State Prison in California's Central Valley. It's mostly flat farmland, a large solar array, signs warning of high winds and dust, and trucks lumbering down Highway 33 past the octagon of razor-wire fencing surrounding the prison. The occasional crop duster flies overhead, surprisingly close to prison grounds. Inside the fence, the scene is even starker -- drab buildings with small slits for windows, dusty open space and sparse, treeless lawns that the prisoners use for soccer games.



At Avenal, as at other Central Valley prisons, incarcerated people are sitting ducks for valley fever, which is endemic to the dry Southwestern US. Research indicates that prisoners are much more likely to contract the disease than are members of the general population. In 2011, a particularly bad year, infection rates for the highest risk California state prisons were dozens of times above those in nearby communities, according to Centers for Disease Control data. Although the fungus is poorly understood, researchers suspect that out-of-town prisoners bused to the Central Valley are especially susceptible because they are not native to the region. Locals may develop some kind of immunity that shields them from the worst valley fever symptoms.

In the past decade, more than 3,500 California prisoners have become sick from valley fever and more than 50 have died from it. Though infection rates decreased significantly after 2011, to fewer than 100 cases each in 2014 and 2015, last year saw another spike with 267 prisoners infected.

The jump can likely be tied to weather patterns: Intense rains -- which allow the fungus, *coccidioidomycosis* (or "cocci"), to grow -- followed by prolonged dry periods seems to lead to higher infection rates. Experts predict infection rates will continue to climb throughout the Southwest due to a combination of drought, climate change and intensive agriculture.

Avenal State Prison, along with the nearby Valley State Prison, has struggled with particularly high valley-fever-infection rates.



In 2013, a federal court order mandated that the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation remove African American and Filipino prisoners -- who are genetically at a much higher risk of getting seriously sick from valley fever -- from Avenal and Pleasant Valley state prisons. Some 2,600 prisoners were transferred. Then in 2015, the department began offering all California prisoners the option of taking a newly available valley fever immunity test and diverting those who test vulnerable from these two prisons. Prisoners can decline the skin test, but cannot decline to be transferred if they test vulnerable.

However, some prisoners are still getting sick. Todd Love, who is white, declined the skin test because he has family in King County, where Avenal is located, and didn't want to risk transfer if he tested negative for immunity. Love, 51, has spent nearly 25 years in prison, the last two years at Avenal. Last year, along with, by his estimates, at least 30 others, Love came down with the infection. "It's the closest to death I've ever been," he says, sitting in the shadeless yard at Avenal. Though he is largely recovered, Love says the illness definitely took a toll on him.

The risk of prisoners contracting valley fever extends beyond the Central Valley, as evidenced in the case of Kenneth Hartman, who's incarcerated in Lancaster, California. Hartman eventually recovered from his 2008 infection after spending several weeks "handcuffed to a bed in an outside hospital" on an intravenous antifungal. When that didn't work, and his kidneys almost failed, he was put on different medication, which worked. He now has low kidney function, which he believes is related to his years of taking antifungal drugs. "Prisons found to be a serious health risk need to be closed," Hartman writes in a letter from prison. "The changes made [to address valley fever] are about managing risk and trying to avoid lawsuits, not about fixing the problems of a massively dysfunctional prison system."

Life-threatening exposure isn't always tied to a particular, site-specific source of pollution. Problems like water contamination or pesticide exposure can occur at prisons regardless of their location on seemingly benign lands. In other cases, prison conditions can be made worse by climate change.

As in California, 2011 was a deadly year in Texas prisons. That summer, 10 prisoners died of heat stroke in state-operated prison units. The deaths are among 22 in-custody hyperthermia deaths that the state has acknowledged in its 108 prisons units. Seventy-nine of those units still lack air-conditioning in 2017, even as summer temperatures regularly soar beyond 100 degrees.

"The beds and cubicle wall are metal. [During summer] they are hot and can't be laid on or touched, like touching the hood of a car that has sit (sic) in the sun on a 130-degree day," Ford writes about the conditions at the Wallace Pack Unit, a Type I geriatric prison incarcerating predominantly elderly and disabled prisoners who require continuous medical care. "Most of us try to wet our sheets and the cement floor. We lay in the water, put the sheet over us while blowing the fan under the sheet, to keep the body temps down."

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice's solution during periods of extreme heat was to tell Pack Unit prisoners to simply drink more water, recommending up to two gallons of water a day on extremely hot days. There was just one problem: The water at the Unit contained between two-and-a-half to four-and-a-half times the level of arsenic permitted by the EPA. Arsenic is a carcinogen. The prisoners drank thousands of gallons of the arsenic-tainted water for more than 10 years before a federal judge ordered TDCJ to truck in clean water for the prisoners last year. TDCJ installed a modern filtration system in January.





Last year, Todd Love, who is serving time at Avenal State Prison in Central Valley, California, suffered from valley fever, an infection that's endemic to the region. "It was really scary," he says. (Photo: Ian Umeda)

Both Ford and Cole worry about how prolonged exposure to arsenic may have affected their medical conditions. Cole has been diagnosed with severe coronary artery disease, Type 2 diabetes, hypertension and high cholesterol and has had two stent implants.

Ford has seven stent implants, high blood pressure, and "serious issues" with his bladder and kidneys that he says are "from the chemicals."

Cole is the lead plaintiff in a class-action lawsuit challenging conditions at the Unit. TDCJ officials are currently appealing the suit's status as class action in federal court.

Our investigation found that violations of drinking-water contamination, including by arsenic and lead, are not isolated to prisons like Wallace Pack, but are present at many prisons, jails and detention centers across the nation. In fact, according to the EPA's enforcement database, federal and state agencies brought 1,149 informal actions and 78 formal actions against regulated prisons, jails and detention centers during the past five years under the Safe Drinking Water Act, more than under any other federal environmental law.

The database, which did not include penalty information for those enforcement actions, gives just a glimpse of the actual extent of environmental violations at prisons: It contains records for just over 1,000 of the country's estimated 6,000 prisons and jails. The discrepancy, the EPA says, may be attributed to incomplete data entry, as well as the fact that it contains only facilities that have at some point been found in violation of federal environmental laws. It's possible that many more violations simply aren't reported.

Prisons' Legacy of Water and Air Pollution

Though many of mass incarceration's most severe environmental health implications affect prisoners most directly, prisons themselves can become a source of pollution for nearby residents and ecosystems.

Take the California Men's Colony state prison (CMC), located about 10 miles from the stunning Pacific Ocean coastline in San Luis Obispo. The prison has a legacy of water pollution dating back nearly two decades, and a history of pollution-related penalties going back to at least 2004, when the prison was fined \$600,000 by the regional California water quality control board for spilling 220,000 gallons of raw sewage into nearby Chorro Creek. The creek flows into Morro Bay, a state-designated marine protected estuary. Despite upgrades to the prison's old wastewater treatment plant after the 2004 spill, problems continued: In 2008 state water officials levied another \$40,000 in fines against CMC for spilling another 20,000 gallons of sewage that resulted in the bay being closed for recreational use and fishing for several days. The prison got into hot water again in 2014, when the EPA levied \$373,500 in fines for Clean Water Act violations. And still the pollution persisted: Spills were documented again in 2015 and in January of this year.

The California Men's Colony may be one of the most egregious water polluters, but it is certainly not alone. Prisons from Virginia to Washington State have been cited for violating point source pollution regulations under both state and federal water laws, as well as for falsifying water pollution reports. For example, Monroe Correctional Complex, the Washington State prison northeast of Seattle where Wright served some time, has been caught in violation on multiple occasions. The prison got caught in 2004 for falsifying water pollution reports to cover up excess fecal coliform levels in water discharged into the Puget Sound. Additionally, records



obtained by the Human Rights Defense Center indicate that Monroe spilled or dumped roughly half a million gallons of contaminated water between 2008 and 2015, polluting nearby rivers and wetlands.

Over the past five years, federal and state agencies have brought 132 informal actions and 28 formal actions against regulated prisons and jails under the Clean Water Act, resulting in \$556,315 in fines.

Prisons can have a significant impact on local air quality as well. In some cases, this comes from on-site sources, like industrial activities associated with prison labor programs or local power generation. Pennsylvania's Department of Corrections, for instance, came under scrutiny from the EPA in 2010-2011 because coal-fired boilers at four state prisons were exceeding federal standards for particulate matter, sulfur dioxide and nitrous oxide. All four facilities were required to clean up their act, and the DOC was required to pay a \$300,000 fine.

An analysis of EPA data indicates that 92 informal actions and 51 formal actions were brought against prisons, jails and detention centers across the country under the Clean Air Act during the past five years, though the total fines for these violations amounted to only \$97,048.

Air quality is also an issue in the Central Valley -- where 16 of California's 33 state prisons are located, in addition to federal facilities and local jails.

Debbie Reyes, who runs the California Prison Moratorium Project, points to emissions from prison-related traffic, including visitor vehicles and the many diesel trucks bringing in supplies. In parts of the Central Valley, such as San Joaquin Valley, which don't meet state standards for ozone levels and particulate matter, the prison industry is yet one more source of air pollution heaped upon an overburdened community. Reyes also notes that prisons can consume a lot of water. In an arid area like the Central Valley, this can be particularly problematic during droughts for cities like Avenal and Porterville that share water resources with overcrowded prison systems.

EPA Guidelines Should Apply to Prisoners, Too

Environmental issues at the US's extensive patchwork of prisons and jails are regulated by a complicated combination of local, state and federal regulatory agencies, such as local water boards and air pollution boards, as well as pesticide, hazardous waste and toxics control agencies. This makes it difficult to grasp the entire extent of the impact prisons have on the environment and on human health in this country.

The only agency with nationwide oversight of these facilities is the EPA. As with other industries, in order to ensure compliance with federal environmental laws, the EPA conducts on-site monitoring of prisons and jails, responds to public tips and complaints, and encourages self-disclosure of violations.

But the Prison Ecology Project argues that the EPA isn't doing nearly enough, especially when it comes to protecting prisoners' health and environmental rights. It points out that under a 1994 executive order signed by President Bill Clinton, all federal agencies are meant to weigh the impacts of their actions on low-income communities and communities of color that have been disproportionately impacted by environmental pollution.

The EPA does have an environmental justice program, but the Prison Ecology Project says the agency does not apply its environmental justice guidelines to prisoners -- despite the fact that the majority of US prisoners are from low-income communities and are people of color -- at least in part because the population data the agency uses does not take prisoners into account. This omission, it says, has implications for how the EPA conducts prison inspections and prison-related environmental reviews, and permits construction of new prison facilities.

The Prison Ecology Project and Human Rights Defense Center are pushing to change this. Last year, in anticipation of the EPA's development of its EJ 2020 Action Agenda Framework, Human Rights Defense Center [submitted a public comment](#) calling on the agency to "ensure that the millions of prisoners in this



country receive the protections that are intended under" Clinton's environmental justice executive order. More than 130 environmental, social justice and prisoners' rights organizations signed on to the letter.

"There are some basic things that come from prisoners being recognized" in the 2020 Action Agenda, says Prison Ecology Project cofounder Panagioti Tsolkas. "For starters, environmental permits would have to take the impact on prison populations into account." Tsolkas says that over the long term, incorporating prisoners into the EPA's environmental justice analysis would help the environmental movement realize that "there are these invisible populations that could consider themselves as part of the environmental movement and strengthen it."

The EPA did not respond to repeated requests for interviews with staff in its environmental justice and enforcement offices. However, in an emailed statement, the agency said "data limitations still exist regarding the amount of real-time information available on transient, temporarily relocated, and displaced populations," but that the agency was working within those challenges.

Prisoners' rights and environmental organizations also point to the Federal Bureau of Prisons' (BOP) failure to consider prisoner well-being in decisions about where to site new facilities, particularly during the environmental review process required under the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA).

As McDaniel of the Abolitionist Law Center (ALC) puts it, "Most of the [Environmental] Impact Statement for a prison will be devoted to issues of the local economy and environment external to the prison, such as traffic, commerce, employment, burden on the local health care system, or the local utilities system, as well as impact on any wildlife and natural resources. In practice, the physical health and general well-being of prisoners are not taken into consideration through this process."

For instance, the prison bureau's 2015 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for its proposed prison on a former mountaintop-removal mining site in Letcher County, Kentucky, fails to consider environmental impacts on the estimated 1,200 people who will be held at the new prison, if it is built. Several groups, including Human Rights Defense Center, the ALC and the Center for Biological Diversity, challenged the EIS on these grounds. A revised EIS, [released earlier this year](#), includes some mention of health implications for prisoners, but does not provide the kind of robust discussion sought by advocates. Human Rights Defense Center contends that this revised EIS might be the only example of an environmental review in which the BOP made any mention of prisoner health.

The BOP, too, declined our reporting team an interview and instead sent an emailed statement saying that it does comply with NEPA requirements and considers the "health and environmental impacts on the prison population when conducting environmental assessments."

The EPA, incidentally, hasn't always taken such a subdued, reactive role on the issue of toxic prisons. In fact, in 2003, the agency summed up the environmental impact of prisons like this:

"Correctional institutions have many environmental matters to consider in order to protect the health of the prisoners, employees, and the community where the prison is located. Some prisons resemble small towns or cities with their attendant industries, population, and infrastructure. Supporting these populations ... requires heating and cooling, wastewater treatment, hazardous waste and trash disposal, asbestos management, drinking water supply, pesticide use, vehicle maintenance and power production, to name a few potential environmental hazards. ... The US Environmental Protection Agency has been inspecting correctional facilities to see how they are faring. From the inspections, it is clear many prisons have room for improvement."

This statement originated from the webpage of EPA's Region 3 office, which covers the mid-Atlantic states --- Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, Delaware, Maryland and Washington, DC. For nearly 10 years, the regional office ran a "Prisons Initiative" to improve environmental compliance at prisons and jails. Under the initiative, the EPA conducted inspections at 15 prisons throughout the region to assess compliance, in addition to outreach and training work. Several of the prisons inspected were issued fines in excess of \$100,000.



The initiative ended in 2011 as, according to an agency statement, the "EPA felt prisons in the Mid-Atlantic region were able to ensure environmental regulation compliance by themselves." Information about the initiative, which was available on the EPA website for more than 15 years, was removed in 2015.

Now, as the Trump White House seeks to close the EPA's Office of Environmental Justice entirely, many protections for marginalized communities look to be on the chopping block. And that means the opportunity to ensure those protections for prisoners may soon be even further out of reach.

The Need for a Collective Shift in Mindset

In the absence of any concrete environmental and public health protections, most actions to improve environmental conditions in prisons seem to be taken only when incarcerated people, prison staff, prisoner rights advocates and environmental groups make enough noise, usually in the form of a lawsuit.

At California's Avenal State Prison, and the Wallace Pack Unit in Texas, relief for prisoners has been primarily achieved through the courts. Wallace Pack's prisoners got clean water only after they sued the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. If the Pack plaintiffs' class-action lawsuit prevails, it could set a major precedent in the state, leading to more such lawsuits and increasing the pressure on officials to air-condition prisons.

As in Texas, it took outside pressure to really get the ball moving on combatting valley fever in California. In 2005, the same year that the cocci fungus began picking up steam in prisons across the state, a federal judge ruled that medical care for state prisoners was so inadequate that it violated the Eighth Amendment's prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment. The judge appointed a medical receiver to oversee the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation's medical care system. But it took a court order in 2013 to get the corrections department to start following the receiver's 2011 recommendation and start moving "high risk individuals" out of prisons with the highest valley fever infection rates.

Over in Pennsylvania, the SCI Fayette prison guards' union fought for access to bottled water for staff and won. But the prisoners there still continue to drink tap water. ALC's McDaniel says the Center's plans to file a lawsuit on behalf of the prisoners is "stuck in limbo" until it has more empirical evidence linking coal ash to their health issues.

All such advocacy efforts and litigation are time-consuming and expensive, and often bear little fruit. Federal environmental regulations bar many of the types of pollution and contamination happening in prisons, but state and federal agencies seem to have little incentive to enforce these laws with regard to prisoners. As McDaniel says: "With respect to prisons, they assume that nobody cares, and for the most part, that's what it is."

Kenneth Hartman points to the broader sentiment that condones threats to the health and lives of people in prison. "The problem is, the intersection of environmental justice and mass incarceration runs right into the teeth of prisoners not being considered worthy of justice," he writes. "If we complain about dirty water, or poor ventilation systems, or inadequate medical care, there is a collective societal shrug: You should have thought about that before you committed crime."

Hartman emphasizes that, in order to truly confront the environmental injustices playing out inside prisons, a collective shift in mindset is necessary. He writes, "The only real solution to these problems requires two things that aren't going to happen any time soon: (1) Serious oversight of the prisons by independent folks with real power to hold officials accountable for outcomes, and (2) our society acknowledging that prisoners are fellow human beings who deserve to be treated with respect and compassion based solely on our humanity."

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The Process of Dehumanization

By Chanton Miles

Let's assume that the goal was to create a prison system to debilitate, hinder and encourage self-destruction. These are conditions I think would work. Create a chain of Department of Correction Facilities that's justified in image but diabolical in action. Take a bunch of Individuals with different cultural, economic, social, religious, and political perspectives, isolate them into an environment that forces them to be autodidactic. Given they're all socially complex on the spectrum of class, education and skill, strip them of everything, family, friends, love and all communication until their voices become distant echoes and their memories fade like 17th century painting with no weather protection. This way they're always combative, in disagreement and divided when it comes to organizing. Create a highly competitive environment to distract them; basketball leagues, soccer, softball, tennis, hockey, handball, shuffle board, horse shoes and whatever leisure activities you can think of. It's like smoking weed to alleviate the pressures of your immediate problems only to be met full force with the oppressive conditions once the high is down. A way to guarantee success in dehumanizing them is to exploit them at every avenue, amplifying the phone prices, minutely inflating the commissary annually, and harassing their visitors. Design a policy to break apart strong family support, if it's not immediate family e.g., mother, father, sister, brother, and grandparents, then they're not allowed to visit until their 18 years old. No nieces and nephews, cousins and family friends with children unless they meet the requisite. That way the new generation won't know their uncles, cousins or aunts. And because this systematic scheme creates behavior that produces anger, violence, low self-esteem, as well as long term psychological effects, remove all educational programming that may aid and assist. Create programs designed to blame the individual e.g., cage your rage, anger management, thinking for a change etc. Therefore, turning a blind eye to their dilapidated family structures, blighted communities and poor educational system that failed them before they even begun. Someone will want to help them, it's human nature to want to do the right thing, helping those in the need of help. So people will have to be convinced they're the ones to blame and not the created conditions. Allow the media access into the worst prison systems, interview the most self-destructive, violent and ignorant prisoners you can find. Allow them to tell their stories, allow them to act like complete animals while on camera, question them about the worst crimes they committed against people in prison, as well as the offense's toward people in society. And since they can't understand the magnitude of their actions they'll encourage their peers to propagate this notoriety. In this way the ignorant, violent, self-destructive prisoner believes the world will finally understand he or she is the baddest criminal alive. Nullifying the empathizer. That way when they scream, kick and holler out in pain, suppress their cries with 3rd rate research and statistics which makes them appear violent, ignorant, self-destructive and subhuman. Make the empathizer think and believe they deserve their punishment. So when we put them in solitary confinement for years, the empathizer won't do anything. When we exploit them through prison labor working for 74 cents a day the empathizer won't do anything. When we beat, gas, restrain and strip search them in the most humiliating ways, e.g., bending and spreading their buttocks, grabbing their nuts then making them squat and cough, or stripping them in the gym or hallway in view of 20 to 50 people, the empathizer won't do anything. When we take federal funding for higher education which could help their transition into society with its highly competitive job market the empathizer won't do anything. When we keep them past their earliest release date and make them do 100 to 120% of their time the empathizer won't do anything. Or when we sometime kill them do to excessive force, lack of medical care, or covering up an officer's "so-called" mistake, the empathizer won't do anything. Many elements of the prison systems in America have been in work since its inception, with catalytic effects. We are being fed a farce to believe the victims of the prison system aren't victims at all. We are being deceived into believing that the educational, economic, political and social processes that failed, blighted, dilapidated, impoverished and gentrified these poor and oppressed areas, shouldn't even be mentioned. This is far beyond "let's assume", this is a clarion for us to wake up!

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Knowing Where We Have Been in Order to Know Where We Are Going: From Protest to Politics

By Lacino Hamilton

As activist fighting for racial equality encounter crises similar to crises activist experienced in the 1950s, 60s and 70s, being aware of those similarities can provide a framework for questioning today's activism and create new approaches as inevitable problems of resistance, cooptation, insufficient knowledge, and changing conditions occur. It can also fire the imagination of millions of Americans who can apply the lessons from that era of activism to particular situations happening now and adopt its' analyses and tactics where appropriate.

I'm not trying here to delineate a total program for activist or their supporters. I'm merely making the argument that the widespread assumption that the removal of artificial racial barriers would result in the automatic integration of Blacks into all aspects of American life turned out to be incorrect. Sixty-two years after Rosa Parks refused to obey Montgomery, Alabama segregation laws on city buses, Blacks as a group still have not achieved full equality and cannot rely on the American government [RE: law enforcement] for basic human treatment.

Most Blacks have simply sought to enjoy the fruits of American society as it exists, but their quest cannot objectively be satisfied within the framework of existing social, political and economic relations. Blacks find themselves stymied by obstacles of far greater magnitude than legal barriers of racial oppression. Stymied by problems which, while conditioned by slavery, Jim Crow, legal and de facto segregation, has not vanished upon their formal demise. Obstacles that are the result of the total society's failure to meet not only the needs of Blacks, but human needs generally.

The Civil Rights Movement attempt to transform from a protest movement [a phase Black Lives Matters and other activists appear to be stuck in] to a political movement, can discern lessons, e.g., that eradicating racial oppression ultimately requires struggle against all its forms and that coalitions among diverse people offer the most promising strategies for challenging oppression systematically.

The main direction of social activist today has been to shrink from the dangerous implications of restructuring American social and economic systems. Instead the focus has been on simpler, more comfortable ways out, e.g., protesting for a video to be released, or for an arrest.

Protest can bring awareness to a problem that is being ignored or minimized. Provide people who are angry and frustrated with racial oppression an outlet to channel their energies. Perhaps even force a resignation every once in a while. But institutional patterns and practices will not change unless protesters go beyond rallying, marching, and what usually amounts to empty slogans. Activists can not be victorious in bringing about racial equality in the absence of a radical change in the consciousness and needs of the people.

The function of activists is to "translate" protest into organize action [i.e., a base for autonomous power that can serve as a catalyst for the attainment of self-determination], which has the chance to develop and to



transcend immediate needs and aspirations toward radical reconstruction of society. This is the case today to an unprecedented extent. The intensive indoctrination and pervasive nature of social inequality calls for an intensive counter-education and organization. It also calls for knowing where we have been, in order to know where we are going.

Bayard Rustin, a close associate of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., organizer of the famous 1963 March on Washington, and one of the leading tacticians of the Civil Rights Movement, most significant literary contribution, in my opinion, is a little known article, "FROM PROTEST TO POLITICS: The Future of the Civil Rights Movement," published in Commentary magazine, February 1964. In this visionary article Mr. Rustin provides a framework for looking at the Civil Rights Movement from 1954 to 1964, and how that movement was evolving from a protest movement into a full-fledge social movement--an evolution many activists are calling for today.

"In a highly industrialized, 20th century civilization," Mr. Rustin wrote, "we hit Jim Crow precisely where it was most anachronistic, dispensable, and vulnerable--in hotels, lunch counters, bus terminals, libraries, swimming pools, and the like." But marches and protest did not impede the flow of commerce in the broadest sense, they did just the opposite.

Direct-action tactics [sit-ins, freedom rides, and the rest] helped bring down the legal foundations of white supremacy in America. However, Mr. Rustin recognized that in desegregating public accommodations, "Blacks affected institutions which were relatively peripheral both to the American socioeconomic order and to the fundamental conditions of life of Black people." Blacks material conditions did not fundamentally change.

The basic relations of Black subordination have been remarkably resistant to protest and surprisingly resilient in adapting new forms. That's because racial oppression cannot be understood in individual terms alone, so-called bad people doing bad things, but a fusion of institutional and systematic discrimination, personal bias, bigotry and social prejudice in a complex web of relationships and structures that shade most aspects of life in society.

Not long after the first flush of sit-ins several developments had taken place that complicated the Civil Rights Movement: one was the shifting focus of the movement in the South, symbolized by the founding of the Alabama based Lowndes County Freedom Organization--the original black panther party--organizing that called for building independent Black institutions or power bases; another was the spread of the movement from the South to the North and West, where Black people were engaging in insurrection in hundreds of cities; and the third, common to the other two, was the expansion of the movement's base in Black communities where revolt was always minutes away, in a timing mechanism which no one had set, but which might go off with some unpredictable set of events.

It was these shifts that began to transform peripheral demands of desegregating public accommodations [reform] into wider expectations for social change [revolution]. No longer were Blacks satisfied with integrating lunch counters. They began to seek advances in employment, housing, schooling, the elimination of police powers, and so forth. The movement expanded its vision beyond race relations to economic and political relations. Or in the words of Civil Rights giant Ella Baker, "the struggle is bigger than eating a hamburger at a white counter."

Of the many valuable analyses of the Civil Rights Movement, one of the more important was understanding the need to examine issues of white supremacy, domination, and exploitation from the perspective of structural rather than individual factors that maintain oppressive economic and social relations. [I would advise those who think that self-help is the answer to familiarize themselves with the long history of such efforts in the Black community, and consider why so many foundered on the shoals of ghetto life.] A dangerous analysis because it created the possibility of Blacks and whites uniting on the issue of class exploitation. That is, the



need to expose and critique normative assumptions that conflate democracy with capitalism and its role in suppressing the exploration of alternative economic and social arrangements. An analysis that did not escape a large portion of the movement, including Dr. King.

At Dean Francis Sayre's invitation, Dr. King delivered his last Sunday morning sermon, "Remaining A Wake Through A Great Revolution," at the National Cathedral [Episcopal] in Washington, DC, on March 31, 1968. As Dr. King stood in the pulpit, paused, looked out into the congregation, and began to speak, his words acknowledged the need to move from protest to politics: "There can be no gain saying of the fact that a great revolution is taking place in the world today." An observation he followed by stating, "it is an unhappy truth that racism is a way of life for the vast majority of white Americans, spoken and unspoken, acknowledged and denied, subtle and sometimes not so subtle. The disease of racism permeates and poisons a whole body politic."

Dr. King and others began asking in whose interests did prevailing systems of domination and exploitation operate? Asking who benefits and who pays for the prevailing practices helped to expose hierarchal relationships as well as hidden advantages and penalties embedded in a purportedly fair and neutral system. Whites were locking Blacks out of positions that would allow their collective, rather than token, economic and social advancement, and marching and protesting, alone, wasn't going to change that.

Hundreds of thousands of people participated in organizing of one kind or another in hundreds of cities throughout America. What began as a protest movement was being challenged to transform itself into a political movement. "Black Power" was the new slogan--an expression of distrust of any "progress" given or conceded by whites, a rejection of paternalism.

Dr. King, though still respected, was being replaced by new heroes: Huey P. Newton and George L. Jackson for instance. The people became more and more concerned about problems untouched by Civil Rights laws, e.g., problems coming out of poverty. At issue, after all, was not civil rights, strictly speaking, but social and economic conditions. Or, in the words of Mr. Rustin, "the very decade which witnessed the decline of the legal Jim Crow also [saw] the rise of de facto segregation in our most fundamental socioeconomic institutions."

More Blacks were unemployed in 1964 than in 1954, and unemployment gap between Blacks and whites had widened. The median income of Blacks during the same time had dropped; a higher percentage of Black workers were concentrated in jobs vulnerable to automation than was ten years previous; more Blacks attended de facto segregated schools in 1964 than in 1954 when the Supreme Court handed down its famous Brown vs Board of Education decision; and behind all that was the continuing growth of racial slums trapping Black in a milieu which, whatever its legal definition, sowed an "unimaginable demoralization."

We learn that the challenge of the Civil Rights Movement evolving from a protest movement into a full fledge social movement became hung up on two apparel contradictory lines of thought: the call for "intelligent moderation," and the "strategy of shock." The first was based on the premise that Blacks' problems were so enormous and complicated that massive reforms required to eradicate them could not realistically be anticipated. Therefore, Blacks just demands were also unrealistic, and would only antagonize white people. Rustin's quarrel with that line of thought was that it did not envision radical changes. Moderates "ignore [or perhaps see all too well] the potentialities inherent in linking Blacks' demands to broader pressures for radical revision of existing policies." The admonition of moderation, was, for all practical purposes, admonition to Blacks to adjust to the status quo.

Attempts were made to do with Blacks what had been historically done with whites: to lure a small number into the system with economic enticements. There were more Black faces in government and board rooms, in newspaper and television, creating the impression of change--siphoning off into the mainstream a small but significant number of Black leaders--a small amount of change and a lot of publicity. The system was working



hard by the late 1960s and early 1970s to contain the frightening explosiveness of a growing revolutionary consciousness.

The second line of thought derived from the premise that there were no forces prepared to move toward radical structural changes. From that it was concluded that the only viable strategy was "shock": Blacks could only change white hearts by traumatizing them with spectacular tales of racial violence and dreams permanently put on hold. But hearts were not relevant to ending Black suffering, i.e., racial affinities nor racial hostilities are rooted there. Racial inequality has deeper roots--institutional--which ultimately molds collective sentiments. Making the struggle for racial equality essentially a revolutionary struggle.

The term revolutionary, as I am using it, as Mr. Rustin and other social justice advocates used it before me refers to the qualitative transformation of fundamental institutions more or less rapidly to the point where the social and economic structures they comprise can no longer be said to be the same. Racial inequality can be eradicated, not merely controlled or avoided on an individual basis. The approach must be long-range and cooperative, and must have the understanding and good will of as many whites as Blacks in order to foster a broad and continuing dialogue among the many people who struggle to find more effective ways to challenge racial inequality.

First, it should be clear that protest or politics the goal is to try to negate the repressive powers of the State. Second, fundamental to abrogating racial inequality is in the principle that we must build and employ independent political vehicles that are not bound to nor controlled by either of the two monopoly parties or established institutions. And third, while the building of autonomous power outside of the realm of the State in the form of independent institutions is primary, civil rights experiences and the summation of the experiences of others in general teaches that ignoring the power of the State is dangerous.

Marching and protest must lead to structural change if people are to redress inequality in American and rid America of the ideology of racial inequality. The law cannot do it. The people must do it for themselves. They must become revolutionaries and refuse to accept the old, traditional roles of protesting for a few superficial concessions that keep in place the structures and systems that make racial inequality possible.

In organizing along these lines marches and protests are more likely to transform into the material base needed to build programs [e.g., critical literacy, media literacy, political theory, political economy, human rights advocacy], and more likely to support and lead to radical reconstruction of society. It is this legacy, the challenge to transform protest into vehicles of self-determination and autonomous political authority of oppressed people, the struggle for racial equality is grounded in. A legacy I encourage today's activist to study to help guide collective practice in the present and build a better future.

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Millions for Prisoners March

Mission Statement

WE SEEK TO UNITE ACTIVISTS, ADVOCATES, PRISONERS, EX-PRISONERS, THEIR FAMILY AND FRIENDS, AS WELL AS ALL OTHERS COMMITTED TO THE FIGHT TO DRASTICALLY REDUCE OR ELIMINATE PRISONS AND THE PRISON SYSTEM, AND REPLACE THEM WITH MORE HUMANE AND EFFECTIVE SYSTEMS. OUR AIM IS TO EXPOSE THE PRISON



INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX FOR THE HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATION THAT IT TRULY IS. WE WANT TO CHALLENGE THE IDEA THAT CAGING AND CONTROLLING PEOPLE KEEPS COMMUNITIES SAFE. WE BELIEVE THAT FOR TOO LONG OUR NATION HAS RELIED UPON INCARCERATION AS A WAY TO SOLVE BROADER SOCIAL PROBLEMS, TO ITS DETRIMENT. IN AUGUST OF 2017, WE WILL MARCH ON WASHINGTON TO BRING WORLD ATTENTION TO THE CONTINUED SLAVERY AND INVOLUNTARY SERVITUDE IN AMERICA, ENABLED BY THE 13TH AMENDMENT AND TO HIGHLIGHT THE EVER INCREASING MOVEMENT AGAINST THE PRISON INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX.

Getting Involved

The Millions for Prisoners March is a grassroots movement dependent on community investment and local organizing. We urge readers to personally take up this human rights cause by getting involved in a variety of ways including creating flyers, making videos, sharing hashtags such as #Abolishthe13th or #EndPrisonSlavery, as well as sharing Millions for Prisoners Facebook pages in order to raise awareness through social media. These are some small steps individuals can take to inform their community. We also encourage participants to spread their impact by organizing their community to mobilize to Washington D.C. For those who are unable to travel to D.C. we ask that communities host solidarity demonstrations on the August 19th. This is a grassroots movement so we are truly relying on the people to make this happen. Below is information on how to form a local organizing committee.

Local Organizing Committee (LOC)

The Local organizing committees shall be comprised of various individuals and organizations situated in local communities throughout the country. The LOCs will provide direct interaction with members of its local community as it relates to the promotion, organization and mobilization for the Millions for Prisoners Human Rights March. The LOC will engage members of the local community, and provide education on the impacts of the 13th amendment of the U.S constitutions and other laws that contribute to mass incarceration in their communities.

Requirements:

1. Minimum of 3 participants to form a LOC- 1 member being the Local Representative
2. All participants must be in agreement to raise awareness and push the Millions for Prisoner Human Rights March agenda. Participants are responsible for connecting with organizations and recruiting new members



Submission Info: In addition to publishing content raising awareness about the march and providing updates on demonstration progress, the No Shackles Newsletter also accepts work from prisoners in the form of articles, art and poetry. This March is about you and some of our most meaningful contributions come from the inside. We also accept submissions from friends and family members of prisoners. For readers interested in submitting their work: typed and printed can be sent to the return address or emailed to <millionsforprisonersmarch@gmail.com>; carbon copy: <amanisawari@gmail.com> Submissions should be marked Attn: No Shackles Newsletter
Facebook: Millions for Prisoners March on Washington



Basic Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners

1. All prisoners shall be treated with the respect due to their inherent dignity and value as human beings.
 2. There shall be no discrimination on the grounds of race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.
 3. It is, however, desirable to respect the religious beliefs and cultural precepts of the group to which prisoners belong, whenever local conditions so require.
 4. The responsibility of prisons for the custody of prisoners and for the protection of society against crime shall be discharged in keeping with a State's other social objectives and its fundamental responsibilities for promoting the well-being and development of all members of society.
 5. Except for those limitations that are demonstrably necessitated by the fact of incarceration, all prisoners shall retain the human rights and fundamental freedoms set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and, where the State concerned is a party, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and
- Political Rights and the Optional Protocol thereto, as well as such other rights as are set out in other United Nations covenants.
6. All prisoners shall have the right to take part in cultural activities and education aimed at the full development of the human personality.
 7. Efforts addressed to the abolition of solitary confinement as a punishment, or to the restriction of its use, should be undertaken and encouraged.
 8. Conditions shall be created enabling prisoners to undertake meaningful remunerated employment which will facilitate their reintegration into the country's labor market and permit them to contribute to their own financial support and to that of their families.
 9. Prisoners shall have access to the health services available in the country without discrimination on the grounds of their legal situation.
 10. With the participation and help of the community and social institutions, and with due regard to the interests of victims, favorable conditions shall be created for the reintegration of the ex-prisoner into society under the best possible conditions.
 11. The above Principles shall be applied impartially.

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